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June 9, 2011

The Honorable Judge Ricardo S. Martinez  
United State District Court, Western District of Washington  
United States Court House  
700 Stewart Street  
Seattle, Washington

Dear Judge Martinez:

I am writing this letter to give you a sense of who I am prior to your passing sentence on me. As my crimes were the result of a spiritual and moral failure, this letter seeks to put those crimes in the context of the spiritual journey my life has taken. That journey has come both to an end and to a beginning with my acceptance of the true Word of God as Jesus Christ. Like Augustine,<sup>1</sup> my path to Truth turned out ultimately to be one of rational philosophic inquiry, with many stops along the way at various different worldviews.

**Childhood.** I was born on January 17, 1954 in Chicago. I was the youngest of three children; my sister was the oldest and my brother was the middle child. In 1957, when I was three, my father uprooted the family and moved to Los Angeles. My father worked for an automobile leasing company. My mother did not work.

We were essentially a middle-class family, but my father constantly complained about the financial strain he was under to support the family. While I was certainly not a "deprived" child, as far as material necessities were concerned, in no way could my childhood be described as "privileged." I attended public schools from Kindergarten through high school. I never had an abundance of material things, noticeably less than my friends. I never received expensive presents for Christmas or birthdays.

Because of her illness, my mother never prepared meals, so, although I never went hungry, my typical fare was cereal in the morning, a bag lunch with a sandwich, and a frozen "TV" dinner. I rarely had new clothes, as I wore my brother's "hand-me-downs," which, when they didn't fit, would cause embarrassment among my schoolmates. My parents avoided, to the extent they could, incurring medical care expenses for me. When I was twelve, they refused to send me to the dentist while I suffered through a complete abscess of a molar, sometimes in excruciating pain. The greatest expense my parents incurred for me as a child was to allow me to have braces on my teeth (which was when the abscess was discovered and extraction of the tooth was required).

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<sup>1</sup> I trust Your Honor knows that I in no way compare myself to St. Augustine, the man. I only point out certain parallels -- and contrasts -- with his path to illustrate that of my own.

My childhood was not a happy one. This was a result of several factors. My mother was mentally ill, ultimately diagnosed with schizophrenia. Unfortunately, her illness manifested itself in the family in the form of a reign of terror characterized by frequent hysterical outbursts that would often carry on for hours on end. From the time I was about eight years old, she suffered from “asthma” (which most doctors concluded was psychosomatic) and took to her bed. She rarely got up, except to go on one of her rants. The worst times were when she was well enough to go out with my father on a social occasion, because she would invariably come home in her most agitated state and carry on all night; it was impossible to sleep through this. It was during these rants that I would pray to God to take me during the night so I would not have to face another day.

Outwardly, my father dealt with the problem of my mother through utter denial, something he readily admitted later in life. What he did not so readily admit is that he explicitly and sternly enforced the same regime on his children. We were instructed in the most severe terms that the “problem” was to remain “in the family” and *not, under any circumstances* to be disclosed to anyone outside it. Nevertheless, when friends came to visit, they could not help notice the problems.

A second factor was that my brother was the “chosen one,” on whom my parents focused virtually all of their attention (including a disproportionate amount of material things), but not in a positive way. They relentlessly drove him to excel in his studies and do things he was not interested in (such as take piano lessons for years). My sister and I were both ignored, for the most part.<sup>2</sup>

I never resented my brother for this. From an early age, I sensed the intolerable burden he carried. I felt somewhat differently about the way he treated me. Unfortunately, probably because he perceived me as some kind of threat to the status forced on him, he was, throughout my childhood both mentally and physically abusive toward me. While we maintained a fair amount of contact during our adult lives until the last ten years or so, needless to say, we never developed any sort of fraternal bond.

I had a better relationship with my sister, as we had the shared status in the family of irrelevance. She was, however, four years older than me, so by the time I was ten or eleven she had found ways to absent herself from the house through social engagements and the like. I never developed any bond with her either, and, although we met on occasion until I was in my early thirties, we simply drifted apart. I haven’t spoken to her in over 20 years. Not long after she moved out of the house at the age of 17, some 44 years ago, she ceased all contact with my parents and never spoke to either of them after that. I’ve never felt an ounce of ill will toward her, as I clearly empathized with her need to dissociate herself from the family.<sup>3</sup>

My parental neglect caused me to become extraordinarily self-reliant as a child. From a very young age, I prepared my own meals and learned how to use the washing machine to do my

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<sup>2</sup> I found out years later during psychoanalysis that this syndrome is not uncommon in dysfunctional Jewish families. The oldest son is idealized by the parents as the one who, through great worldly success, will bring great glory to the family, i.e., to the parents, so all of the emotional energy in the family is focused on him, while the other children are essentially ignored.

<sup>3</sup> The only outright hatred that existed in my family was between my brother and sister. For as long as I can remember from my earliest childhood, they simply hated each other. This carried over to their adult lives and, as far as I know, still persists to this day.

own laundry. My mother never took me to or picked me up from school, or drove me anywhere else, so I learned how to take public transportation by the time I was ten. I spent as much time away from home as I could, such as staying overnight at friends' houses, or taking the bus to the beach on weekends and during the summer. My parents rarely objected to my absences (as long as it didn't cost money), and, I suspect, were rather pleased with the arrangement. The sole requirement of my parents was that I consistently bring home stellar report cards from school. Since I always found my studies fairly easy, this was not a difficult requirement to meet.

My sister moved out of the house when I was 13 and my brother when I was 14. My father finally left the house shortly after that. Although my mother's fits became even more intolerable, since I was her sole audience, they were less frequent without the presence of my father, who was her primary target. Other than these outbursts, I rarely saw my mother, since either I was away from the house or, when I was there, she typically confined herself to her bedroom.

I am a Jew by birth, both on my mother's and father's side. My father's family in Chicago were observant Jews. My mother, on the other hand, had little Jewish upbringing. After the move to Los Angeles, when I was three, we became what are now commonly called "secular Jews." My siblings and I received no religious education or training, and we never attended services at a synagogue (except for the occasional bar- or bas-mitzvah of a son or daughter of a friend or relative) and never held Passover at the house. I had always from a young age believed in God.

When I was around thirteen, I struggled to make sense of my life. I was alone in bed late at night unable to sleep, enduring one of my mother's long hysterical rants (she often would start in the evening and continue until dawn), when I asked God, "Why? Why have you put me through this for virtually my entire conscious life?" Having no religious upbringing, I relied on my faculty of rational thinking to try to sort it out.

First, I reasoned, this cannot be a punishment for any sins I committed. I was a child. What had I done? I had done everything my parents asked of me; I brought home straight A's on my report card; I had done everything I could to minimize the burden I presented to my family; I had not disclosed the problems in the family to any outsider. No, I concluded, this was not a punishment for anything I had done.

Next, my parents often implied, to my mind at least, that I was, in fact, the source of my mother's, and the whole family's problems. My mother would often complain about the stress imposed on her by having to deal with *three* children. My father too, in his rants about money pressures, would cite the burden of having to support *five* people. As the *third* child, and the *fifth* person to enter the family, I figured I was the straw that broke the camel's back. If only I had not come along, everything would have been fine. *But I refused to accept the blame.* I refuted it with the simple retort, "I was not asked to be born."

So, I asked God, what's the deal? I'm not being punished for sins I've committed. Even if my birth was, in fact, the triggering cause of the family disaster, that blame cannot justly be placed on me. And then it hit me. It was, in fact a *deal*. *That was the only rational explanation.* In return for the pain of my childhood, God had granted me my *self-reliance*.

There were corollaries to this conclusion. First, I was free from any parental influence in any decision I might make in my life. I was now responsible for all of the decisions I would make in my life from that day forward. Second, I was free from my parents' *authority*.<sup>4</sup>

The multitude of feelings this epiphany caused me at that moment was overwhelming. I had a feeling of liberation that was simply indescribable. While this didn't lessen the daily dread and pain I experienced of living in the nightmare of my house, I knew I could endure it, because of the compensation of freedom that I received for it. I was at peace with God, because, I believed, He had finally made His plan clear to me. It would be decades later when I would realize how utterly false this epiphany was.

Nevertheless, it had some positive effects on me. I found that a lot of the resentments toward my parents and siblings that had built up inside me from my earliest childhood began, over a period of time, to dissipate. I now looked at my father and siblings as just three human beings trying the best they could to deal with an impossible situation. I began to feel sorry for my mother, even as she continued to keep me up all night with her rants.

While there were a few minor skirmishes that occurred between my father and me as I asserted my autonomy, the seminal confrontation occurred when I was sixteen, and my father found out I had dropped out of high school shortly after beginning my senior year. (I had been granted "early acceptance" to St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico directly out of my junior year, but decided not to take it and instead asked to enroll after my senior year of high school. The College agreed, and also made it clear that my enrollment the following year was not conditioned upon my actually completing my senior year of high school.) This resulted in a nearly violent confrontation in my father's office, something that had never happened before. After an extremely tense moment in which I was truly afraid my father was going to inflict serious injury on me (he was much larger than I was), he suddenly snapped out of his rage and backed down. He simply asked for my assurance that I would, in fact, enroll at St. John's the following year, and I readily gave it to him.

At that moment, my father realized that I was free from his authority, and he accepted it. From that day on, our relationship was completely transformed. He never again told me what to do or not do. We became friends. We would go out to dinner and have lively debates on a variety of topics. At one point during the year, my mother became especially intolerable, and I lived with him for a few months.

Unfortunately, my father never abandoned his vision of my brother as the "chosen one," and in our adult lives, he followed my brother's success with an almost slavish interest and an overblown idealization of it. While I was no longer an irritant, he still relegated me to the role of irrelevance and never showed more than a nominal interest in my career. My father and I never became truly close, but we remained on friendly terms for most of the rest of his life.

Perhaps the most important consequence of accepting complete responsibility for my life was that over the next few years I developed a moral code by which to live. Again, I'd had no religious upbringing, and the turbulence in my family prevented my parents from instilling in me

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<sup>4</sup> Ironically, or perhaps not, thirteen is the age at which, in the Jewish tradition a boy announces at his *bar-mitzvah*, "Today I am a man."

any fundamental moral principles.<sup>5</sup> Because I'd no conception of faith, I once again had to rely on my reasoning faculty to generate principles that I would seek to live by in my dealings with others. I came up with five: (i) don't hurt others and always help, to the extent possible, those who ask for it; (ii) honor my commitments, keep my promises; (iii) violence is *never* acceptable, except when absolutely necessary to defend myself or others from a violent attack; (iv) always act in good faith toward others; and (v) always presume that others are acting in good faith toward me.

Despite colossal failures -- witness my presence before Your Honor -- I have sought over the course of my life to govern my behavior toward others in accordance with these simple precepts. My fortitude has now been strengthened by my faith in Christ.

**College.** I attended St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico and graduated with a B.A. in liberal arts. St. John's is a small liberal arts college, but holds a very unique position among institutions of higher learning. It is often referred to as the "Great Books" college, because its curriculum, or the "Program," as it is called, is centered around reading the works of the great thinkers of Western civilization from Homer to Freud, and as part of the rigorous math and science part of the Program, from Euclid to Einstein. The original works themselves are the required assignments, not commentaries or textbooks. There are no lectures. All classes are small and take the form of discussions on the particular assigned work, with the professors, all of whom are called "tutors," leading the discussion. The goal is to develop in students the faculty of rigorous critical thinking.<sup>6</sup>

My father paid for my first two years of college, but only for tuition and room and board. I scraped together money to buy necessities (e.g., toiletries, transportation) from savings from summer jobs, and working part-time at the school music library. I never could afford books, so I borrowed the required books from my brother, who attended St. John's also (he was a senior when I was a freshman). After my sophomore year, my father never contributed to my college or law school education or my support. I financed the remainder of my education through financial aid, consisting mostly of student loans (on which I made my final payment in 1998, repaying the loans in full.).

I had, from my earliest memories as a child, an interest in philosophy. Not surprisingly, therefore, I immersed myself in the St. John's Program and I cannot overstate the impact my years at St. John's has had, and continues to have, in my life. Looking back, it played a critical

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<sup>5</sup> To his credit, my father, by example did exemplify certain virtues. Despite his constant grouching, he met his obligations to support his family until we all had moved out of the house. He did not leave my mother until I was fourteen, despite his obvious severe unhappiness in his marriage. And he appeared to remain faithful to my mother as long as he was with her.

<sup>6</sup> St. John's is actually the third oldest college in the United States, after Harvard and William and Mary, founded as King Williams School in 1696 at its current location across the street from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. (The College's most famous graduate is Francis Scott Key.) The Program was not, however, instituted until the late 1940's, when a group of leading educational thinkers at the time (e.g., Robert Hutchins, Scott Buchanan, Mortimer Adler) devised it and was able to implement it at what was then a small, unremarkable, failing college. In the early 1960's, the College built a second campus on donated property in the hills in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Program on the two campuses is identical, and students are allowed to transfer between campuses. I attended all four years at the Santa Fe campus.



role in the journey toward my ultimate acceptance of Christ as the true Path. I would like to briefly highlight a few of the stops on that journey that I experienced while at St. Johns.

The freshman year readings in philosophy at St. John's were dominated by Plato and Aristotle, and I became especially attracted to Plato. I loved the deep layers of meaning one could extract from the dialogues, but most of all I was drawn to Plato's theory of *logos*, the notion that the universe was governed by reasoned order, and that the faculty of reason, illustrated in the dialogues through Socrates' method of questioning, was the only sure path to truth. Plato's exaltation of pure reason appealed to me, because, ignorant of faith, I had always had to rely on my analytic abilities to solve whatever problems or questions I faced.

The next stop on my journey at St. John's was Immanuel Kant, whom we read in the junior year. Kant is considered by many (including me, for most of my life) to be the greatest philosopher ever. Studying Kant turned out for me to be both exhilarating and shattering. Writing at the peak of the Enlightenment, Kant, ironically through the most meticulous reasoning, completely refuted Plato and demonstrated that pure reason could *never* lead to truth when the ultimate questions were confronted, most significantly, the existence of God.

Kant showed how human reason was *limited*,<sup>7</sup> that its farthest reach was understanding the laws governing the phenomenal world, i.e., science. When the human understanding tried to go beyond its limit, such as trying to prove, or disprove, God's existence, it invariably became enmeshed in self-contradictory paradoxes. The question of God's existence (as well as questions of free will and the immortality of the soul) was a matter of *faith*.

Kant's reasoning (again, ironically) was so compelling, I had no choice but to accept it, even as it completely destroyed my ability to worship at Plato's altar of Pure Reason. Looking back, I realized God had used Kant as his instrument to knock Reason from its pedestal in my soul.

The problem was I had no idea what *faith* was.

Part of the problem was that the previous (sophomore) year's readings at St. John's were dominated by the Holy Bible and other Christian writings. Encountering Judeo-Christian concepts for the first time in my life, I was entirely frustrated in my complete inability to gain even the slightest insight into the mysteries of faith. I found the Old Testament to be either extremely tedious and meaningless or a collection of uninteresting stories that seemed equally meaningless. As for the New Testament, none of it meant anything to me or made any sense. It was even worse with the epistles of Paul. I found them downright offensive. It was as if God had put a shield over my soul to keep any glimmer of Light from entering. Looking back, I believe it was because I continued to live under the delusion that freedom was derived from *self-reliance*. Decades later, I would come to believe -- ironically, from reading Paul -- that the exact opposite is true, that freedom comes only from a complete reliance on God.

In my senior year at St. John's, I dabbled in existentialism, as expounded by Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*. I found existentialism comforting, because without faith to fill the vacuum left in my soul after Kant had knocked Reason from its perch, existentialism held that *nothing* fills that vacuum. Existentialism is also comforting because it relieves one from

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<sup>7</sup> The parallel development in political Enlightenment thought of *limited government* is no coincidence.

anguishing over the reasons for one's beliefs, since the doctrine holds that there are ultimately no such reasons.

The only other work I read at St. John's my senior year that had an impact on me was Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. Considered by some (myself included) to be the greatest novel ever written, it is a murder mystery that questions the nature of moral responsibility from every conceivable aspect imaginable. Dostoyevsky was a devout Russian Orthodox Christian, and all his works are grounded in faith in Christ and the Word of God. *The Brothers Karamazov* had a profound visceral effect on me. Because of my preoccupation with existentialism, though, I did not ponder that effect with any great depth or insight. Several decades later, I would come to realize that God had used *The Brothers K* (as it is commonly called) to instill the smallest flicker of faith in my soul, a tiny flame that in His infinite Grace, He would not let die.

When I reached my senior year, I had a difficult choice to make. I was accepted to the University of Toronto Graduate School in Philosophy. I also applied to law school and was accepted. Fortunately, I was able to defer the decision for a year, because I was awarded a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship that provided money for a year of travel abroad. I thus spent the year after graduation from St. John's hitchhiking around Europe, staying in youth hostels, learning to speak German, and meeting and conversing with people from all walks of life from all over the world.

During that year, I found myself becoming less enamored with philosophy. I thought about how little most philosophers knew about the "real world." i.e., the world that absorbs the other 99.99999% of the people on the planet. I also realized how little *I* knew about the real world. I knew nothing about the world of commerce I saw going on around me (needless to say St. John's had no business courses, and its "economics" program consisted of a few seminars on Adam Smith, Karl Marx and John Maynard Keynes, which were typically disasters, because nobody knew any Econ. 101). I didn't know what a "corporation" was, what "stock" was, what a "bond" was, what a "merger" was, what "supply and demand" meant. I had no idea what really went on in the banks in which I exchanged my dollars for local currency. What was "inflation" anyway? (this was 1977).

That was how I made up my mind to go to law school and practice law. I regarded it as my *education in the real world*. But I also made a deal with myself. I vowed to myself that I would practice law for 20 years and then quit. (Since I would graduate law school in 1980, I would quit in the millennial year of 2000.) During those 20 years, I would live well below my means (I had never had much of a materialistic streak), save as much as I could, then, regardless of the circumstances, live off whatever I had managed to put away, and devote the rest of my life to the study of philosophy. If, after I quit practicing -- after my real world education -- I had something to say in the philosophical realm, there was a much greater chance it would be worth hearing.

**Law School.** I entered Harvard Law School in 1977. From an intellectual standpoint, I found the Law School relatively fulfilling, although not as much as St. John's. Fortunately, many of the professors were eminent thinkers in their respective fields, so their primary interest in class was to "drill down" from the case holdings and "black letter law" to the first principles and premises of social norms (the "philosophy" behind the law) that resulted in the holdings and rulings, and then lead the discussion at that level.

During my third year at law school, I decided that I wanted to practice tax law, as this was most conducive to my personality. I was highly non-confrontational, so I was averse to litigation or any other practice, such as corporate or contract law, that involved negotiating with an adverse party. The basic work of a tax lawyer (meaning in this case tax *planning*, as opposed to tax controversy work -- which I would also engage in over the years) involved doing penetrating analysis of the most complex laws in existence, creative thinking, research, meditation and brainstorming with colleagues. This suited my personality more than any other area of law.

I graduated from Harvard Law School, earning my J.D. degree, *cum laude*, in 1980. When I graduated, I was flat broke with a substantial student loan debt. I had to ask the law firm for which I was going to work for an advance on my first two weeks salary to support myself while I studied for the bar exam.

**Career.** I accepted an offer out of law school to work as an associate at a Beverly Hills law firm called Rosenfeld, Meyer & Susman. It was relatively small, with only about thirty lawyers, and had a substantial entertainment practice. The primary reason I accepted their offer over others was that I would be able to immediately start out in the tax department, while other firms required new associates to “rotate” for a period of time among various departments.

In the middle of 1984, I was becoming restless -- my “real world education” was at a standstill. I heard that the law firm of Pollock, Bloom & Dekom in Los Angeles, a prominent “boutique” entertainment firm with only about twelve attorneys at the time, was looking for a tax lawyer, because they didn’t like hiring outside firms to do their clients’ tax work. It was a great opportunity. I wanted to see up close how power in the real world was actually executed, down to its finest details, and the Pollock firm offered that. Tom Pollock and Jake Bloom were both considered “power players” in show business, because of their “A-list” clientele.

I was introduced to Haim Saban by a business manager in 1986, while I was at Pollock, Bloom, and he asked me to work on a transaction for him. Saban was pleased with my work on the transaction, and over the next 15 years I did a substantial amount of tax work for him and his companies. I was grateful for the work I did for Saban, because his transactions were always unique and creative, thus providing me with constantly new challenges and learning experiences.

In 1990 I began, of all things, to take acting classes and discovered a newfound passion for acting and drama. In 1992, I left Pollock, Bloom and started practicing on my own out of my home office. I had a small but reliable group of clients, including Saban, so I never had to spend time soliciting new business. My plan was to practice law part-time, which would generate enough income to support myself, and devote the rest of my time to my newfound passion. Over the next three years, I successfully implemented the plan. (I acted in a few plays, got a small role in a film, wrote a play that was produced in a theater in Hollywood, and directed another play.)

My plan was derailed after I met my ex-wife, Kelly. We began dating in 1995 and were married in September 1996. Although she had no reason to be, Kelly was obsessively jealous and could not tolerate my association with the drama world (i.e., with actresses). By the time we got married, I had abandoned my pursuit of drama. I redirected all my energies to my law practice and began working long hours. Kelly and I had a daughter, Madeline, in January 1998, but not long after that, because of Kelly’s alcohol and drug abuse, the marriage was effectively over



My entry into the world of drama, and my subsequent marriage and daughter, caused me to put aside in my mind the vow I had made to myself two decades earlier to quit the practice of law in the year 2000. But by the end of 1999, I began to rethink it, at least as a possibility, although I knew I would have to give myself an “extension” on my original timetable. While there was certainly more to learn about the nature of secular power, I felt that I had learned enough over the previous two decades to fulfill my educational mission and move on with my spiritual life. My only real financial obligation was to my daughter. I’ve never had a materialistic streak and knew I would have little problem living simply and relatively inexpensively.

I had at the time around five projects outstanding for Saban that I had not been able to get to, because of my workload. All of the projects were extremely large, complicated plans that had to be researched and implemented and would take enormous amounts of time. I felt obligated to finish these projects before I quit practicing law, and I used them as an excuse to defer any decision about taking such a momentous step in my life. I decided to take the next year to finish the projects and then reassess my plans.

I began working 12-14 hour days seven days a week as I tackled the projects and kept up with my current workload. I finished the second one (a massive reorganization of Saban’s unwieldy structure for his business and investment holdings) on August 1, 2000. I still had the remaining projects left, and the sale by Saban of his stake in Fox Family Worldwide was looming.

I realized I was in a state of maximum burnout. I had taken only one two-week vacation (my honeymoon in 1996) since I had begun practicing law on my own in 1992. At that point, I wasn’t sure I was capable of continuing to work at all, much less at the pace I had set for myself. So, I made what would turn out to be the most fateful decision of my life. I began using methamphetamine, “speed.”

The speed allowed me to work days on end without sleep. Over the next two years, I was able to complete the outstanding projects as well as do the enormous amount of work involved in the sale of Fox Family to Disney, which closed in October 2001. Because of the huge fee I earned in that deal (and evaded tax on), I thought that there would be no financial impediment to implementing my 20-plus year plan to quit practicing law.

Although the Fox Family sale closed in 2001, there were still the legal opinions to be issued and the tax returns to be filed. There was an absolute deadline for completing these tasks, October 15, 2002, the final due date of the tax returns. My working hours were barely reduced as I worked on both the opinions and the tax returns in the face of the deadline.

The deadline was also a blessing. I had now made the absolute decision that on October 15, 2002, I would retire from the practice of law *and* stop using speed. As luck would have it, I used up the last of my speed on October 13 and finished my work one day early on October 14. My law practice was over and so was my drug abuse. Unfortunately, the latter cessation would only last a few months.

**Stutz and Faith.** I have suffered from clinical depression since I was 18. I started seeing my current psychiatrist, Phil Stutz, in 1990. Stutz had an enormous impact on my spiritual life. Stutz was no ordinary psychiatrist. While his job was clearly to treat mental

disorders, his method was entirely spiritually based. And not some “new age” spirituality. He was essentially a Jungian therapist, but he studied and learned from an obscure Christian philosopher named Rudolf Steiner.

Stutz was in no way religious, in the sense of preaching God from any particular religious standpoint. But the notion of God (which he often referred to as “The Whole” -- reminded me a little of Plotinus) was essential to his therapy and he used spiritual imagery and concepts as tools to implement it. For example, he used the concept of submission to God the Father as a tool to achieve humility, which, from a purely psychoanalytic standpoint is necessary to breaking down the ego. To deal with adversity in one’s life he used a tool he called “hatred and misunderstanding,” and the imagery he used to effectuate the tool was Christ on the Cross.

But the supremely important thing I gained from my work with Stutz was a concept of *faith*, a thing about which I still remained entirely clueless. He did not teach faith from a religious standpoint; but as I came to understand the comprehensive spiritual framework from which Stutz approached his therapy, it became clear that faith was, in fact, the lynchpin to the entire enterprise.

Stutz believed in a loving God and a world governed by *knowable* spiritual laws (he was vehemently anti-Kantian, but we just agreed to disagree on this). And the entire therapy proceeded from those premises. A few months into the therapy, I asked him, what if one doesn’t believe in these things? He said, “It doesn’t matter whether you believe in them or not, but you do have to have *faith*.” I was confused. He reminded me we were doing psychotherapy, not theology. He explained that the ego constantly strives to make itself separate and apart from the world, to see itself as superior to the world (i.e., as God). This, he said, is the fundamental root of all psychological disorder. By then, I had worked with him enough to fully accept that premise. *Faith*, he said, is the *tool* by which the ego *surrenders itself* to the world. Without *faith*, one can never heal one’s psychological wounds.

While it was an understanding of faith in a purely psychoanalytic context, it was the first time I had *any context* in which to understand it. I continually practiced the “tool” of faith as I worked with Phil over many years. Looking back, I see it as a sort of “training” or “conditioning” for ultimately accepting Christ in my life. I doubt that I could ever have received God’s blessing of faith in Christ without doing that work.

**The Dark Years.** I often refer to the period from October 2002, when I quit practicing law, to my arrest in July 2008 as “the dark years” or “the lost years.” After I retired from practicing law, I struggled with severe depression and the drug addiction that was caused by my methamphetamine use beginning in 2000. What I hadn’t realized, what I hadn’t admitted to myself, is that, when I finally quit the practice of law, I had the expectation of experiencing something that I had only experienced for very few brief periods in my life: Happiness. It was something that had eluded me virtually my entire life, and I desperately wanted it. But I had no clue how to find it. I was, in fact, absolutely miserable.

My life became a complete shambles. I stopped associating with anyone from my past with whom I could have a fruitful friendship. I knew that everyone around me only valued my “friendship” because I had money. I didn’t care, though, because, I thought, maybe that’s the only route to happiness. Maybe one really does have to buy it.

One of the nearly universal effects of methamphetamine addiction is that one becomes completely dysfunctional in life. The simplest tasks become overwhelming. I rarely left my house, because just getting ready to go out was too daunting. At the point where I simply gave up trying to free myself from my addiction (triggered by a particularly stressful circumstance involving my ex-wife committing spousal abuse against her new husband -- she remarried shortly after our divorce), I also gave up trying to lead any kind of productive life at all.

I was in a self-destructive downward spiral that ultimately lasted nearly six years. When I failed to report the income I earned, thus committing tax evasion, I asked myself, "What am I doing? This is so wrong. It's in complete violation of my moral code." Not only that, but it was against my *political* beliefs. I had been *against* the Bush tax cuts that were in effect when I was required to report the income. So, I was simultaneously committing the sin of hypocrisy. I had no answer. I had no anchor, no compass. I was in a void. I couldn't feel the walls.

When a friend from high school emailed me in 2006 that my name appeared in The New York Times in connection with the investigation into Quellos by the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, I read the article with no more interest than any similar article that didn't contain my name or a transaction I was intimately involved in. When I watched the hearings of the Subcommittee on my computer and read the Subcommittee's Report, I was impassive when I was mentioned, somehow thinking it had nothing to do with me.

I can't even remember now the details of obtaining a false passport, which I too knew was wrong. When I think about it why I did it, there is only one word for it: bizarre. I look back and it is hard to comprehend that the person who did these things is the same one who is now writing this.

My passion for spiritual and intellectual life slipped away. I stopped reading books. I began to think about atheism for the first time in my life. Maybe, I thought, I just have to accept the fact that God doesn't exist, that the world came about as the result of random collisions, that there is no purpose in our lives. (Writing this now makes me shudder). By the time I got arrested, I had indeed declared myself to be an atheist. I pretended to think that I was finally free from all the spiritual striving that I had experienced in my life. It was a return to existentialism, but without any of the intellectual depth.

I actually stopped using methamphetamine about three months before I was arrested, not through any great force of will, but through a kind of "conditioned response." Every time I used the drug, it threw me into a severe depression. But the absence of the drug made little difference in my life. I was still spiritually a burnt-out shell, a body with no soul. I was not suicidal, but I really didn't care if I lived or died.

**Finding Christ.** The first positive effect of being in jail was that I at least had a purpose in life: getting out. So, I devoted myself to that cause, even as I continued to be denied bail. But having some purpose -- regaining my liberty -- pulled me out of the meaningless void that I was in before I got arrested. It was a first step on the ladder.

Because my quest to get bail gave my life some direction, some forward motion, I found I couldn't tolerate boredom very well when I wasn't working on my case. So, I took the next step and started to read books. I picked up an Agatha Christie murder mystery from the jail bookshelf and became hooked. I started having my attorney order me as many of her books as I could get.

I was still a declared atheist, though. One of the inmates in my unit was an Orthodox Jew, and when he found out I was Jewish by birth, he urged me to come to the Jewish services. I told him I was an atheist, but he continued to press me. I went to the services every week for several weeks. I did so with an open mind and open heart, because I knew how many spiritual way stations I had stopped at over the previous forty or so years. I would be pleased to find my atheism just another stop, and if Judaism was next, that was fine by me. I even started doing the morning prayer ritual with the Orthodox Jew, learning to say the prayers in Hebrew. After a few months, however, I had to admit to myself that the Jewish services and prayers didn't resonate. The one positive affect they had, however, is that I was no longer so readily declaring my atheism.

I strangely found some spiritual comfort in my Agatha Christie books. After having read some twenty or thirty of them, I was struck by how her books, considered not singly, but as an entire opus, resembled in many ways *The Brothers Karamazov*. It dawned on me that Christie was actually an intellectual descendant of Dostoyevsky (I still believe this).

And then one day, as I was perusing the jail bookshelf, waiting for my next delivery of Christie novels to come in the mail, I came across a tattered version of *The Brothers K* itself. I looked at it and noted it was a recent translation. I thought, "Hey, what a great coincidence. I think I'll reread it." Looking back, I know now that God had at that moment started me on my final leg of the journey.

Once again, it touched the deepest part of my soul, and once again I didn't know why. I suppose everyone who finds Christ does it in his or her own way. I began to wonder why Dostoyevsky, the greatest novelist of all time, was so dedicated to revealing Christ through his works. I could not, of course, answer the question, since my experience with reading the New Testament had been such an abject failure. When I had read great thinkers who were Christian (like Kant), I always ascribed their faith to the fact that they were indoctrinated in Christianity since birth. In effect, they were trapped in their belief system.

I realized that *The Brothers K* was different. It puts Christianity through the ringer. It struck me that in writing the book, Dostoyevsky was putting his faith on trial, subjecting it, on every page, to the most grueling tests the human mind could devise. No, Dostoyevsky wasn't "trapped" by his "belief system." Then I had the strangest epiphany. I thought, "This guy is so much smarter than I am, so much deeper than I could ever hope to be, so much more profound than I could ever imagine anyone being. If he was willing to put his faith on the line like this, and he came through it as much a believer as ever, who am I to question it? He obviously knows something I don't." Looking back, I regard that moment as the one in which I became a Christian.

I immediately found one of the pocket versions of the New Testament that are ubiquitous in the jail and started reading. This time, I felt the words filling up my soul. One day, when I was absorbed in one of the Gospels, one of the inmates I had become friendly with, a seriously hard-core gangster, saw me reading the book and poked his head into my cell. "It's hard to read that and not accept that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, isn't it?" he asked, smiling. I looked up at him in some wonderment and said, "Yeah, it is."

The Gospels still baffled me, but this time in a much different way. I saw the Gospels as *infinite* mysteries in the sense of an invitation to the soul to pursue them. They are a well to



which one can always go for one's entire life to fill one's soul with their Truths, without fear that the invitation will ever be rescinded. In this way, they stand apart from any of the other Great Books I had read, and this gave me great comfort. I had reached the end of my spiritual quest, but it was just beginning.

I then steeled myself for the reading of Paul's epistles, remembering my painful experience with them at St. John's. I was, however, astonished. It was Paul, I realized, who articulated the doctrines (among many others) of faith, love and most importantly for me, grace, which the advent of Christ brought to the world. Grace. A concept nowhere found, at least in Western thought, before the advent of Christ, a concept I marveled at, and continue to do so. Grace, which has no measure, the infinite nature of which mirrors the infinite nature of the mysteries of the Word itself. How Paul had managed to articulate these doctrines I regarded as nothing short of a miracle, and furthered my belief in the Holy Spirit. I thought, "Paul is truly the greatest philosopher who ever lived."

After I returned home from jail, I read Gary Wills's *What Paul Meant*, and was again astonished how Wills's interpretation mirrored my own and provided so many more insights into Paul's work. I learned for the first time that Paul had written *before* the Gospels, and this only confirmed my belief that his works were truly miracles of the Holy Spirit.

I saw that Wills had done a translation of Augustine's *Confessions*, and I read it. I had not remembered one word of it from St. John's, only that it was tedious and boring. This time I couldn't put it down. I was stunned that Augustine's journey was similar to mine, with many stops along the way, driven by his relentless search for truth through his intellect and reason (although the stops were decidedly different than mine<sup>8</sup>).

### THE FUTURE.

I have only four goals for the future:

1. I will prayerfully deepen my faith and understanding of the Word of God as revealed by the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Son. I will continue to study Scripture, as well as the most profound thinkers that the Holy Spirit has blessed to assist in that understanding.
2. I will reestablish a relationship with my daughter. She remains the love of my life, the only thing that I value in this world. I will do everything in my legal power to do this. I will seek to open up her heart to Christ, not through exhortation, but by gentle suggestion.
3. While, as I mentioned, I still live by the moral code I developed as a teenager, it is now tethered to my Christian faith. And I have come to a few new beliefs from my study of the Gospel. Almost everyone in this world is, by worldly necessity, preoccupied with the need to support themselves and provide for their family, and these are virtuous goals. There are some, however, for whom this is not the case. My Christian beliefs compel me to the conclusion that for those who are so worldly (i.e., financially) fortunate as to be free from the pressing needs of this world, there is one, and only one, life worth living. It is not only the highest calling in their lives, but the *only* calling in their lives, to alleviate the suffering of the powerless and oppressed.

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<sup>8</sup> Among many other doctrines, Augustine wrestled with Manichaeism, Skepticism, Materialism (not in the sense we understand it, but as a notion of God being co-terminous with the material universe), Neo-Platonism, and even, for a minute, astrology.

If it is God's Will to grant me the blessing of freedom from worldly needs, I intend to devote the rest of my life to helping those who are less fortunate.

4. I intend to continue my secular intellectual pursuits, which for now at least, consist in a passion for history. Unfortunately, St. John's has no history curriculum on its Program (other than reading Herodotus, Thucydides and Tacitus), so I've never had any formal history education since high school. I've found over the past twenty years or so, that it is the one secular intellectual area that I love.

I thank your Honor for this opportunity to present myself. I come before you humbled and contrite to accept your judgment and sentence.

Respectfully submitted,

  
MATTHEW GALE KRANE